

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MANAMA IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A (DECON ON RECEIPT)

TAGS: MARR BA US

SUBJECT: MIDEASTFOR RENT NEGOTIATIONS

REF: MANAMA 0022

1. PER REFTEL REQUEST, FOLLOWING IS COMPLETE TEXT

WASHINGTON STAR-NEWS BACK PAGE ARTICLE JANUARY 6 BY
JEREMIAH O'LEARY ENTITLED QUOTE U.S. BASE COST HIKE BY
BAHRAIN UNQUOTE:

2. QUOTE: THE STRATEGIC PERSIAN GULF ISLAND SHEIKHDOM OF
BAHRAIN, HOME PORT FOR THE U.S. MIDDLE EAST FORCE, HAS
QUIETLY RAISED THE PRICE TAG FOR RENEWING THE AMERICAN
BASE AGREEMENT FROM \$600,000 TO \$4 MILLION A YEAR.

3. QUOTE: NEGOTIATIONS ARE NOW IN PROGRESS BETWEEN
AMBASSADOR JOSEPH TWINAN AND BAHRAINI OFFICIALS ON THE
BASE AGREEMENT WHICH EXPIRED IN OCTOBER, ACCORDING TO
SOURCES HERE.

4. QUOTE: THE BASE IS SMALL, CONSISTING OF ONE PIER AND
ABOUT 10 ACRES OF LAND AT THE PORT OF MANAMA. IT IS THE
HOME PORT OF THE ELECTRONIC SHIP, LA SALLE, FLAG-SHIP
OF THE MIDEAST FORCE, PLUS TWO DESTROYERS WHICH MAKE UP
THE ONLY AMERICAN FORCE BETWEEN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE
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PHILIPPINES.

5. QUOTE: WASHINGTON STRATEGIC PLANNERS WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE THIS MINOR BUT SYMBOLIC AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE PERSIAN GULF. BAHRAIN IS NOT REGARDED IN U.S. OFFICIAL CIRCLES AS A BASE FROM WHICH OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS COULD BE LAUNCHED OR SUPPORTED, BUT THE THREE-SHIP FLOTILLA DOES MAKE PERIODIC CALLS IN THE RED SEA, THE ARABIAN SEA AND THE PERSIAN GULF AND ITS OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY REACHES FROM THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT TO THE EAST COAST OF AFRICA.

6. QUOTE: BAHRAIN, WHICH BECAME INDEPENDENT FROM THE OTHER SMALL GULF SHEIKDOMS WHEN ITS STATUS AS A BRITISH PROTECTORATE ENDED IN 1971, COMPRISSES ONLY 231 SQUARE MILES AND HAS ABOUT 220,000 INHABITANTS.

7. QUOTE: THE RULER IS SHEIKH ISA BIN SALMAN AL KHALIFAH, A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY THAT HAS RULED BAHRAIN SINCE THE 18TH CENTURY. THE EMIR, WHO IS A CONSERVATIVE WELL-EDUCATED RULER AND FRIENDLY TO THE UNITED STATES, IS BELIEVED TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUATION OF THE AMERICAN PRESENCE.

8. QUOTE: BUT LIKE OTHER PRO-WESTERN LEADERS OF THE ARAB WORLD, HE PERIODICALLY FINDS IT IMPORTANT TO BUTTRESS HIS STATUS WITH OTHER MORE RADICAL ARAB STATES BY ASSERTING HIMSELF IN RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.

9. QUOTE: FOR EXAMPLE, KING HASSAN OF MOROCCO SUPPORTED THE RABAT SUMMIT RESOLUTION BACKING THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH HIS INDEPENDENT CREDENTIALS.

10. QUOTE: THUS, AS LANDLORD TO THE ONLY AMERICAN BASE ON ARAB MIDDLE EAST SOIL, THIS MAY BE THE PRIMARY REASON BAHRAIN REOPENED THE BASE AGREEMENT TERMS.

11. QUOTE: BAHRAIN, WHICH DEPENDED FOR ITS ECONOMIC LIVELIHOOD ON PEARL FISHING UNTIL 40 YEARS AGO, IS NOT A MAJOR OIL POWER. CURRENT PRODUCTION BY A SUBSIDIARY COMPANY OF TEXACO AND STANDARD OF CALIFORNIA, IS ON THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ORDER OF 75,000 BARRELS A DAY.

12. QUOTE: MORE IMPORTANT TO BAHRAIN IS THAT IT HAS ONE OF THE LARGEST REFINERIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST WHICH PROCESSES CRUDE PIPED TO THE ISLAND FROM SAUDI ARABIA.

13. QUOTE: THE EMIR IS IN THE MARKET FOR MORE U.S. TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERTS IN THE FIELDS OF POWER, FISHERIES

AND OTHER SPECIALTIES. OFFICIALS BELIEVE THE CHANCES ARE

GOOD THAT THE UNITED STATES CAN MEET THE NEW BAHRAINI
PRICE TAG FOR THE BASE FACILITY BY AN AGREEMENT
INVOLVING TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE.

14. QUOTE: IT WAS EMPHASIZED THAT THERE IS NO DEADLINE
PRESSURE TO COMPLICATE THE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE BAHRAIN
HAS SET NO DATE BY WHICH A PROPOSAL MUST BE MET. UNQUOTE.
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